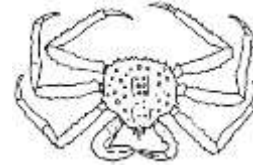

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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JUNEAU AREA PERSONAL USE RED AND BLUE KING CRAB FISHERY ANNOUNCEMENT

Juneau. . . The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) announced today that the personal use red and blue king crab fishing season in Section 11-A (Juneau area) will **not open in 2012**.

The department surveys the red king crab population in Section 11-A in late June and generates estimates of abundance of sexually mature crab, legal-sized crab, and post recruits, or crab that have been legal-size for more than one season. The 2012 estimates constitute a 12% decrease in legal biomass and a 1% increase in mature biomass from 2011. This is the lowest legal biomass estimate and the second lowest mature biomass for the past 22 years. Overall, stock status for the Juneau area is below average and has declined since 2011.

From 2007 through 2011, the Section 11-A red king crab stock health, while below average, had improved based primarily on increases in survey catch per unit of effort (CPUE) of post-recruit males. These crabs were largely responsible for providing the small harvestable surpluses available in 2010 and 2011. The observed 12% decrease in legal male abundance in 2012 indicates that the aging post-recruit population is no longer capable of supporting harvests.

The 2012 survey results indicate that 90% of the estimated mature male biomass is currently legal-size. A similar pattern was observed during the 1980s when Section 11-A red king crab biomass estimates were at their lowest levels on record. The current size composition of the population indicates that there is little potential for recruitment into the legal-size class in the short term. A male red king crab becomes sexually mature at about 8 years of age and recruits into the legal population at 9-10 years of age. Survey results show a significant short-term increase in juvenile male CPUE and provided that these crabs continue to be observed on future surveys, they represent a modest recruitment to the mature-size class in the next several years.

The department remains committed to implementing continued improvements to the existing red king crab stock assessment program. Such improvements may include an expansion of work done in other surveyed areas in the region where biomass estimates from mark-recapture methodology in addition to the conventional catch-survey analysis have been derived.

As previously announced, the waters of Sections 12-B, 15-B, and 15-C are currently open to personal use fishing for red and blue king crabs with a daily bag and possession limit of three red and blue king crab in combination [5 AAC 77.664(b)]. Those waters outside of Sections 12-B, 15-B, and 15-C not listed as closed areas below, are also currently open to personal use fishing for red and blue king crabs with a daily bag and possession limit of six red and blue king crab in combination [5 AAC 77.664(a)(1)].

As previously announced the following areas will remain closed to fishing for red and blue king crabs until further notice due to poor stock health:

1. Port Frederick (all waters of Port Frederick south and west of a line between the light at Cannery Point to the northernmost tip of Halibut Island and from there to a point at 58°09.60' N. latitude 135°30.00' W. longitude);
2. Section 11-D, Seymour Canal (waters of Seymour Canal north of 57°37.00' N. latitude);
3. Section 13-C, Peril Strait (all waters of Peril Strait including Hoonah Sound, Ushk Bay, Rodman Bay, Saook Bay, Hanus Bay, Sitkoh Bay, and contiguous waters west of a line from Point Hayes to Point Thatcher and north of a line from Pogibshi Point due west to the Chichagof shoreline).

The emergency order corresponding to this announcement is EO 1C1612.

News releases web site: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>.

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